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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fifty-second session

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (25 - 27 June 2001)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency, Ambassador Ali Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran), who first welcomed Mexico as newly-elected member of the Executive Committee. He then informed the Committee of requests for observer status from Bulgaria, Estonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ghana, Romania, Senegal and Turkmenistan. In accordance with the decision taken by the Executive Committee at its fifty-first session on observer participation (A/AC.96/944, para 31(b)), the Standing Committee agreed to these requests. The Chairman welcomed observer delegations including non-governmental organization (NGO) delegations, notably those from the Americas and the Europe regions. He also noted with pleasure the presence in an observer capacity of Ms. Ulla-Maija Finskas, President of the World Food Programme Executive Board, and looked forward to the benefit of sharing experience on the functioning of WFP's and UNHCR's respective governing bodies.

2. Agenda item 4 on programme and funding was chaired by His Excellency, Ambassador Johan Molander (Sweden), Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/51/SC/CRP.11, Rev.1) was adopted.

III. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING

4. The draft report of the Standing Committee's twentieth meeting held on 12-14 March 2001, was adopted (EC/51/SC/CRP.10).

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IV. DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

5. The Chairman welcomed Ms. Mary Ann Wyrsch as new Deputy High Commissioner. In her opening remarks, she referred to the important review launched by the High Commissioner under Actions 1, 2 and 3 leading to a redefinition of UNHCR's core business and reprioritization of activities. While this was essential to ensure full effectiveness of the organization, it was also very painful in terms of reductions of activities, with inevitable repercussions on programmes and staff. As Deputy High Commissioner, her focus in the coming months would be on improving strategic planning and a range of management processes, including a comprehensive review of human resources systems.

V. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

A. Update on the Global Consultations on International Protection

6. The Director of the Department of International Protection introduced the Update on Global Consultations on International Protection (EC/51/SC/CRP.12), commented briefly on the other two sub-items and announced UNHCR's intention to launch a concerted campaign to encourage more rigorous observance of the principle of *non-refoulement*. She noted that the Global Consultations had already made a positive contribution to promoting understanding of protection issues and a willingness amongst a broader group of players to cooperate better to tackle them. She drew attention to the list of follow-up actions that UNHCR had drawn up on the basis of the first third-track meeting on 8 and 9 March (EC/51/SC/CRP.12, Annex II). She reported that five regional meetings had been held (Pretoria, Ottawa, Macau, Budapest and San José), all of which had promoted approaches sensitive to situations on the ground and brought useful perspectives. In all tracks of the Consultations, UNHCR was making every effort to involve NGOs and refugees meaningfully. The Consultations would contribute to the development of an Agenda for Protection, which UNHCR would present to the Ministerial Meeting of States Parties to the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees on 12 December 2001.

7. Regarding track two, she highlighted the useful contribution of the first expert roundtable in Lisbon (3-4 May 2001), which had focused on the Convention's exclusion and cessation clauses.[1] The next roundtable, to be held in Cambridge in July, would examine *non-refoulement* (Article 33) and UNHCR's supervisory responsibility under Article 35. The discussion on the rationale and suggestions for making implementation of the Convention and Protocol more effective should inform the Ministerial Meeting's reflection on the challenges of better implementation. At the same time, UNHCR was committed to distilling the insights generated under the second track into a set of UNHCR guidelines to complement the *Handbook on Criteria for the Determination of Refugees Status*.

8. Delegations were pleased with the progress of the Global Consultations to date and welcomed their focus on reaffirming the applicability and continued centrality of the 1951 Convention, as well as on strengthening the Convention-based asylum system. One delegation highlighted the useful

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[1] See EC/01/2Track/1

advances in the areas of registration, interception and maintaining the civilian character of asylum. Another said that the Global Consultations were setting down markers for positive agreement on a range of issues, and observed that the problem was not the Convention itself, but how it was being implemented. Many welcomed the "global" and participatory nature of the consultations and urged UNHCR to continue efforts to associate civil-society actors, NGOs and refugees themselves. One delegation referred to the holding of a Refugee Parliament at the French National Assembly as a positive example and also encouraged use of the electronic media to provide refugees more information and ensure greater participation. Another delegation urged that, throughout the discussions, the social, political and economic impact on developing host countries remain a central theme and that development assistance for both hosting countries and countries of asylum was essential. This delegation recalled the link between assistance and protection.

9. There was broad support for the Ministerial Meeting of State Parties under track one and its universal reaffirmation of the central place of the Convention in the international refugee protection regime, promotion of more effective implementation and of accessions to the refugee instruments. One delegation suggested that a revitalization of Article 35 should be the focus of the meeting, while another considered that the meeting should enable ministers to focus on how to improve governance and directions for the future. Another delegation cautioned, however, that it was unlikely that States Parties would precipitate the establishment of any new mechanism to improve governance. Many delegations urged that the preparatory process, including participation in the Swiss-chaired Advisory Group of States Parties, be open-ended, transparent and participatory, as a means to ensure both high-level participation and committed follow-up. Another suggested the creation of a tripartite (States, NGOs, UNHCR) working group to prepare the Agenda for Protection.

10. On the expert roundtable discussions under track two, one delegation emphasized that, while examining academic opinion was important, there was a need to focus on State practice, particularly in revising the *Handbook*. Many delegations observed that the regional meetings were providing a valuable opportunity for regional players to engage in a dialogue on concrete issues at regional level, and thus strengthened regional participation in the Consultations. Another delegation suggested that it was important to examine the need for harmonization or codification of State practice of third track issues, since these were considered as peripheral to or not covered by the Convention and Protocol. One delegation hoped that specific recommendations would be made to resolve existing problems. Another urged UNHCR to be more radical in its recommendations and expressed concern about the disjuncture of statements made by delegation within the consultations and in the European Union Council and in other fora.

11. Responding to requests for additional clarifications, the Director of International Protection explained that the Agenda for Protection would be presented in preliminary form to the Ministerial meeting, since the consultations would continue into 2002. It could consist of a compilation of the most significant requests for action - some immediate, some longer-term - coming out of the third track, and range from the feasibility of considering an additional protocol, flexible application of resettlement criteria in mass influx, to working with ExCom to develop a conclusion on registration as

proposed at the meeting held in March. UNHCR would explore some mechanism for it to be endorsed. On the suggestion to create a tripartite group to draft the Agenda for Protection, she noted that there was already extensive NGO participation in the third track. In response to another question, she clarified that the update on the second track was provided for information, and that UNHCR would update the ExCom on all aspects of the Consultations. On the question of the link between the second-track discussions and UNHCR's intention to revise its *Handbook*, the Director clarified that UNHCR wished to present guidelines to complement and update aspects of the *Handbook*, drawing on a balance of academic and expert opinion and state practice. Regarding the impact on refugee-hosting countries and the importance of development assistance and responsibility-sharing, the Director noted that the Cairo regional meeting in July would assess such impact and explore ways to facilitate the work of host countries. Follow-up discussions on burden and responsibility sharing would be held in September. Finally, the Director clarified that one of two third track meetings in 2002 would focus on women and children, to draw on a number of activities relating to women and children taking place in 2001.

B. UNHCR's Activities in the Field of Statelessness

12. The Deputy Director of the Department of International Protection introduced an overview of UNHCR's activities in the field of statelessness (EC/51/SC/CRP.13), drawing attention to the fact that activities had expanded over past years in the face of new needs and growing demands. Despite the positive impact of the accession campaign, only 53 and 23 States had so far become parties respectively to the 1954 Convention on relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Current challenges in the area of statelessness included the disproportionate impact of statelessness issues on women and children and greater focus on activities in regions outside Europe. A recent evaluation of UNHCR's activities in this field had recommended an expansion of activities, but resources were a major constraint.

13. Delegations commended UNHCR for its activities in the field of statelessness and recognized that the problem was global in nature, requiring cooperation at global level to tackle it. Some expressed support for the recommendations contained in paragraph 26 of the conference room paper and suggested that they should be incorporated into the conclusions on protection to be presented to the Executive Committee at its next session. One delegation suggested that the proposed recommendations be reworded slightly to avoid any impression that men do not face problems in this field. The same delegation stressed the importance of ensuring that all children, regardless of their nationality, status or place or birth, are registered when born and that clear rules are in place to avoid statelessness. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the close cooperation between UNHCR and national authorities on this issue.

14. Concluding this sub-item, the Deputy Director confirmed that statelessness was a core activity of UNHCR, but lack of resources to comprehensively fulfil obligations was a key issue. She specified that technical and advisory services encompassed advice and assistance in drafting national laws; in promoting compatibility between the laws of neighbouring States and more globally; in drafting and negotiating treaties and

agreements; in reviewing national laws in anticipation of accession to international instruments; and expertise in the interpretation, implementation and administration of laws.

C. Resettlement

15. Under this sub-item, the Deputy Director of the Department of International Protection referred to the note on *New Directions for Resettlement Policy and Practice* (EC/51/SC/INF.2).

16. Many delegations welcomed UNHCR's reaffirmation that resettlement was an important tool of international protection and a core activity. A number of delegations pledged continued cooperation with the Office in this field and highlighted measures taken to expedite acceptance or introduce more flexible criteria. One delegation pointed to the close cooperation between governments, UNHCR and NGOs as one of the reasons for the success of resettlement efforts. Some expressed concern that UNHCR's financial constraints could diminish its ability to engage with resettlement countries as an active partner: without sufficient resources allocated to resettlement, UNHCR would be unable to fulfil this core mandate function.

17. Many delegations commended UNHCR's efforts to expand the number of new resettlement countries, now numbering eight. A number of delegations offered assistance to develop the capacity of new resettlement countries. Many delegations encouraged all resettlement countries to increase their resettlement capacity and new countries to join the ranks of resettlement countries.

18. In terms of resettlement policy, there was broad agreement that resettlement should not be used as a substitute for asylum nor to restrict the right to seek and enjoy asylum. Delegations also agreed with UNHCR that resettlement should not be used to manage migration flows. One delegation said that more consideration should be given to resettlement as a durable solution. Many viewed the more strategic utilization of resettlement suggested in UNHCR's Note to be a challenge. In this regard, one delegation pointed out that there needed to be strict priority-setting to address the needs of those with acute physical and legal protection issues, after which "strategic utilization" of resettlement could be explored. Another delegation suggested that States needed to provide close strategic linkages between support to local integration and voluntary repatriation, and use resettlement for those who could not benefit from other solutions. One delegation observed that complementary asylum and resettlement systems were the most effective way to strengthen refugee protection. It was also pointed out that targeted resettlement enhanced protection of at-risk refugees and a number of models and examples were cited, all involving close cooperation between UNHCR, States and NGOs.

19. Many delegations appreciated the Note's emphasis on responsibility-sharing and the need for governments to shoulder their share of the responsibility with refugee-hosting countries. Many delegations described resettlement as being critical to burden-sharing, as part of a comprehensive response to address the situation of countries overwhelmed by the large-scale arrival of refugees. One delegation welcomed the Note's recognition that countries of asylum were often financially and logistically ill-equipped to

support the arrival of large numbers of refugees. A number regretted that prevailing criteria for resettlement were overly restrictive and suggested the introduction of more flexible criteria for specific groups of refugees. One delegation argued that restrictive criteria resulted in lack of resettlement opportunities for refugees with medical problems, particularly HIV/AIDS, which placed a heavy burden on asylum countries already unable to meet the health needs of their own nationals. Instead of narrowing criteria, one delegation suggested that States should ensure that resettlement remained a flexible tool of protection, which could also be used to assist developing countries hosting large numbers of refugees. While insisting on the need for adequate safeguards, one delegation suggested that the humanitarian evacuation programme implemented in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1999 might provide a model that could be replicated for expedited processing in case of a mass influx or rapid refugee movement.

20. Many delegations expressed support for the principles endorsed at the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees hosted by Sweden in April 2001. Several suggested that it might be useful to request ExCom to endorse these principles. One delegation suggested that ExCom should rather endorse a broader document, not relating exclusively to resettled refugees, and recommended broadening the terms of paragraph 28 (h) of the conference room paper. One delegation observed that the focus should now be on concrete implementation of the experiences and best practices highlighted during the conference. A workshop in Oslo on resettlement in November 2001, would provide some additional recommendations to the Global Consultations.

21. Several delegations expressed concern about the risk of fraud throughout the resettlement process insisting that it was essential to ensure transparency and integrity of the referral process. Some pledged support for UNHCR's efforts to pull together expertise to fight fraud and to develop a management and accountability framework that would ensure the credibility and integrity of UNHCR's operations. One delegation observed that the procedures employed for the identification of candidates for resettlement were weak and discriminatory, insisting that clear guidelines were needed to ensure transparency in the identification process and discourage fraudulent practices. Many other delegations urged that transparency in the resettlement process be preserved and strengthened. One delegation observed that, while the allegations of fraud were disturbing, they should not detract from continuing efforts to work in the best interests of the refugees.

22. One delegation suggested that resettlement be considered as a durable solution for unaccompanied minors, when it was deemed to be in the best interests of the child. Another delegation requested clarification of the criteria used to resettle children and the circumstances surrounding the alleged "deportation" of nationals of its country to a resettlement country that had reportedly led to two deaths.

23. The Deputy Director thanked delegations for their expressions of support and constructive contributions to the debate which were in line with the spirit of cooperation that had also been reflected in the annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement held the previous week. He agreed with delegations on the need to enhance oversight and ensure more reliable processes to strengthen the credibility and integrity of resettlement and

mentioned a number of measures taken by the Department in this regard. As to the alleged deportation of children under the guise of resettlement, the Deputy made clear that UNHCR's resettlement criteria had been followed and offered to share these with the delegation concerned and with other delegations who wished more information about UNHCR's resettlement criteria and activities. On funding, the Deputy Director shared the concerns about the impact of UNHCR's "downsizing" on resettlement operations and acknowledged that this could have a negative impact on some resettlement activities.

24. Responding to concerns raised over the allegations of fraud and bribery in the Kenya resettlement programme, the Deputy High Commissioner later gave an update on the investigations underway in Kenya. She reported that the results were expected by the end of the month and would be fully shared with ExCom in due course.

VI. HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

25. In a statement to the Standing Committee, the High Commissioner shared his views and concerns over the funding of UNHCR's programmes. While the annual programme and budget for the current year had been approved by the Executive Committee in October 2000, it was clear that adequate funding was not forthcoming to cover requirements. It was largely in response to this dilemma that he had undertaken Actions 1, 2 and 3, of which the results had been shared with the Committee. For his Office to be able to function effectively, a sounder, more predictable basis was needed and he counted on the assistance of the Committee to achieve this. The level of the proposed budget for 2002 was an absolute minimum. A new funding strategy had been proposed as Action 3. It comprised, among other elements, a proposed "normative " level for governmental contributions. He was aware of certain constraints facing donors in terms of their domestic procedures. He hoped nevertheless that they would be able to make "soft commitments" ahead of ExCom, which could then be formalized at the time of the Pledging Conference in December.

26. Responding to this statement, delegations expressed unanimous support for the review that had been undertaken by the High Commissioner, hailed as a "bold initiative". Many delegations also warmly welcomed the opportunity for a frank and open dialogue on these important issues.

27. There was widespread acknowledgement of the need for stable and predictable funding. Several delegations reacted positively to the call for "soft commitments" and confirmed that efforts were underway for this purpose. Several also referred to other options they were currently exploring such as bilateral agreements with UNHCR. The Swedish bilateral agreement with UNHCR provided a useful model. One delegation advocated joint pledging that could be based on jointly negotiated funding levels. Several delegations, however, expressed some reticence as to the proposal of any "fixed formulae" for governmental contributions, considering that this needed further reflection.

28. Some delegations, particularly major refugee-hosting countries, expressed concern over the cuts in programmes that resulted from Action 2, drawing attention to the fact that such cuts had increased the burden on host governments. One delegation said that UNHCR should be obliged to consult

with host governments when cutting assistance. Several delegations also asked how UNHCR planned to prioritize between and within "core" activities as well as "non-core" activities.

29. Some delegations called for improvements in the formulation of UNHCR's programmes and budgets, with more emphasis on results and impact, and strategic priorities defined at a global level. Others called for earlier and more meaningful consultations than had occurred this year, recalling how useful they had found the pilot strategic planning workshops that had taken place in Zambia and Thailand. One delegation requested that there should be two more pilot strategic planning missions early in 2002. This delegation, which considered that the bar had been set too low for 2002, also called for UNHCR to set a higher budget for 2003.

30. Responding to the many statements that had been made, the High Commissioner thanked the Committee for the useful and wide-ranging exchange that had taken place. He recalled the global nature of UNHCR's mandate, one that required active partnership with governments and with NGOs. He emphasized that, to undertake its work effectively, UNHCR needed to be present and to be endowed with a minimum level of resources. Without this minimum level - which only donors could provide - it could not respond credibly to the responsibilities which the international community had conferred on it.

VII. PROGRAMME AND FUNDING

A. Update on annual programme budget and funding projections for 2001

31. The Director of the Division of Communication and Information (DCI) introduced conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.15 providing a programme and funding review for 2001 and projections for 2002. He gave details of the situation at the end of 2000 and developments in the first half of 2001, including the outcome of Actions 1 and 2 which had involved a thorough review of priorities and reorientation of programmes. Despite the net reductions achieved and the early and substantial contributions received from some donors, the Office nevertheless currently faced a projected deficit of $ 43.5 million for the year 2001. With new needs linked to recent displacements in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), this deficit was likely to increase. The proposed programme budget for 2002 was currently set at $ 828.1 million. The Director of DCI insisted that a timely and realistic humanitarian financial envelope was essential to determine the shape and size of future programmes, to facilitate strategic planning and enhance credibility vis-à-vis all stakeholders.

32. In the ensuing discussion several delegations made reference to the draft decision issued as an addendum to document EC/51/SC/CRP.15. Proposed amendments were put forward to paragraphs 2, 5 and 7 of this draft text. The revised text (see Annex I A) was subsequently approved.

The Americas

33. Presenting an update of UNHCR's objectives and activities in the Americas, the Director of the Regional Bureau highlighted two overriding

challenges in the region: strengthening the regional protection framework and addressing the expanding phenomenon of generalized forced displacement due to the conflict in Colombia. To meet the first challenge, it was important to ensure that the value of refugee protection was recognized at transnational level through the Puebla Process and the Inter-American system. In the case of Colombia, UNHCR had adopted a two-track approach, providing protection and solutions for Colombian refugees and asylum-seekers as well as supporting national efforts in favour of IDPS in Colombia itself, in the context of the agreement signed between the Government and UNHCR in January 1999.

34. In the discussions that followed, one delegation acknowledged the need to improve the functioning of their refugee status determination system, but confirmed that asylum-seekers were given immediate protection and provided with access to basic needs, such as healthcare, education and employment. Another delegation described its efforts, as a new resettlement country, aimed at finding durable solutions for refugees of various nationalities.

35. Several delegations referred to the continued armed conflict in Colombia and the increasing violence within that country, noting that the peace process confronted numerous obstacles and highlighting the large number of internally displaced within the country. They expressed appreciation for UNHCR's efforts towards ensuring that IDP issues received the attention needed at national and international level and applauded its support in developing a legal framework for IDPs in Colombia, where they are provided with access to healthcare, education and land. They also commended UNHCR for its work with local authorities and for its Operational Plan for Colombia. They stressed the importance of UNHCR's presence at field level to coordinate amongst the various national and international agencies and to identify solutions to the IDP situation.

36. One delegation highlighted the usefulness of UNHCR's assessment missions to neighbouring countries and stressed the need for UNHCR to have a regular presence in border areas for monitoring and documentation of Colombians. This delegation welcomed UNHCR's continued support in emergency preparedness measures, and supported its contribution to tripartite mechanisms in the region.

37. An observer delegation speaking on behalf of NGOs called for increased public information campaigns and training for the various levels of agencies involved in the interception and the inspection of migrants and refugees in the region, as well as a need for further review of detention policies and conditions for asylum-seekers, especially women and children. They also highlighted the impacts of UNHCR's budget cuts in the region on NGO capacity to provide social assistance to individual cases, in some instances crippling their ability to pay the necessary fees for refugee documentation and naturalisation.

38. Another delegation expressed support for UNHCR's efforts to strengthen asylum in the Americas, mentioning the Puebla Process and recent accessions to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol by Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago. The main challenge would now be to ensure that the accessions led to the effective implementation of these instruments. This delegation also welcomed the establishment of an additional field office in Venezuela.

39. In addressing a number of specific issues raised, the Director confirmed that UNHCR would continue to maintain a Regional Office in Argentina, due to the needs at regional level. She welcomed the recently adopted Immigration and Naturalization Service regulations, and looked forward to further progress in this area. In regard to the Caribbean, she observed that ways needed to be found to strengthen the existing pro-bono protection network, which would undoubtedly carry financial implications.

Europe

40. Introducing the review of UNHCR's operations in Europe, the Director of the Bureau for Europe recalled that the South-Eastern Europe Operation had been merged with the Europe Bureau since early June 2001. Referring to the worrying situation in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), he gave details of UNHCR's activities in the region including actions taken under its emergency response capacity. He described UNHCR's action elsewhere in Europe in addressing displacements, including some of a protracted nature. He also evoked the broader challenges of developing high quality asylum systems throughout Europe.

41. Several delegations echoed the concern over the current situation FYROM. They commended UNHCR for its contingency planning and rapid response to the displacements and encouraged the Office to plan for all scenarios, committing their support for its action including the request for additional funds. The generosity of the population of Kosovo in hosting displaced from FYROM was noted with appreciation.

42. With respect to other developments in South-Eastern Europe, some delegations highlighted the importance of returns for the overall stability in the region, commending UNHCR for its role in protecting minorities. Delegations from the region shared information on post-Dayton returnee numbers as well as on political, judicial and reconstruction plans to facilitate further returns in the coming months. They urged that governments should speed up the implementation of return plans, warning the international community, in particular the donors, that a reduced political and financial engagement would be premature and mistaken. One delegation voiced concern that the continued scaling down of UNHCR's operations in South-Eastern Europe would hinder its critical role in promoting and facilitating minority return. Those choosing *not* to return, would also be in need of assistance to integrate locally.

43. Referring to the situation of refugees and internally displaced in and from Chechnya (Russian Federation), one delegation emphasized that all returns should be voluntary and thanked governmental and non-governmental organizations for the assistance they were providing, commending the inter-agency appeal. This delegation suggested that the main flow of humanitarian aid should go to Chechnya, where most of the needs were, as this would promote voluntary return; it should focus on temporary housing, food for the temporarily displaced and strengthening of the NGO/civil society. Other delegations expressed concern over the lack of proper investigation of alleged human rights abuses in Chechnya, and stressed that the current humanitarian situation inside Chechnya precluded repatriation. One delegation deplored the dire security conditions under which humanitarian workers were operating in Chechnya.

44. The 1996 CIS Conference was characterized by one delegation as a major event, even though some of its goals were still to be met. Another delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the process and readiness to participate in the activities outlined in the recent workplan, commending UNHCR, IOM and OSCE for their involvement in the follow-up to the Conference, and encouraging UNHCR to continue its coordinating functions, including in more specific sub-regional projects.

45. One delegation called for continued international humanitarian assistance in Azerbaijan as the presence of displaced persons influenced the country's reconstruction process. He urged the international community to step up its efforts to ensure conditions conducive for the return of the displaced persons. UNHCR must have plans ready should ongoing discussions over Nagorno-Karabakh pave the way for such a return.

46. Several delegations recognized UNHCR as a constructive partner in the European Union asylum harmonization process and called for its continued involvement and input both in the ongoing harmonization process and in the longer term. One delegation stressed UNHCR's important role in the dialogue between countries of asylum, origin and transit. Another recalled that the harmonized asylum system of the members of the European Union had an important "export value" and urged that standard setting at the lowest common denominator must be avoided. Another delegation urged European Union Governments to define their asylum policies in compliance with UNHCR's advice, and made particular reference to the upcoming EU Directive on the "refugee" definition. Several delegations encouraged UNHCR to promote asylum systems in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe that would further integrate and expand the European asylum space. The Stability Pact was described as a useful framework for the development of asylum and migration policies in South-Eastern Europe.

47. Responding to a number of specific issues raised by delegations, the Director of the Bureau for Europe emphasized with respect to post-Dayton return, that UNHCR encouraged comprehensive approaches that involve dialogue among all countries concerned, urging for continuous advances in the return movement. Successful returns would also motivate others who had not yet made up their minds. Temporary local integration should be the solution for those not wishing to go back immediately. The latter was also being applied as a general policy approach to caseloads in the Northern Caucasus not willing or able to return in the near future. It derived from the objective of avoiding protracted assistance programmes - which were unsatisfactory both for the displaced and for UNHCR. The policy of temporary local integration was applicable in the case of Ingushetia (Russina Federation), as conditions were not yet conducive for return to Chechnya. As long as the security situation had not improved, increased involvement inside Chechnya would not be an option. UNHCR hoped that return would eventually be possible, but pending that, other temporary solutions must be found. Temporary local integration would not only be a relief measure; the dignity of the displaced must also be considered. UNHCR would also continue to play a catalytic role in engaging developmental actors.

48. As to the CIS Conference follow-up, emphasis was now on regional activities, such as the recent regional meeting on statelessness held in Kiev at the end of 2000, and the workshop on border management, hosted by Sweden

in May 2001. The upcoming coordination meeting between staff representatives of the lead agencies in Vienna would consolidate this approach, and be shared in due course with the Committee.

B. Global Report on Activities in 2000

49. The Director of DCI introduced the Global Report 2000 - the first to be based on the unified annual programme budget structure - drawing attention to new features of the Report. He brought three corrigenda to the attention of the Committee. He also called for suggestions for further improvements to the content and presentation of the Report.

50. Several delegations commended the quality of the Report welcoming the changes in structure and the inclusion of introductory chapters on policy priorities and donor profiles as well as the section on refugee-hosting countries.

51. At the same time, some delegations stressed the need to strengthen the Report's analytical and evaluative aspects. Proposals for improvements included: linking operational strategy to objectives, activities and impact, including performance indicators; improving the table of overall income and expenditures and providing self-critical analysis focusing on the effectiveness and impact of UNHCR's programmes. One delegation suggested that UNHCR should develop performance indicators in consultation with WFP, which works on the basis of result-oriented planning. Two delegations also reiterated their acceptance of the Global Report as fulfilling all their reporting requirements, instead of resource-intensive, individual reporting.

52. Responding to one delegation's inquiry, the Director of DCI confirmed that the figures used in the Global Report were those of the audited annual accounts. He also took note of the various improvements suggested and proposed contacting individual delegations in order to discuss these further.

C. Budget Consultations

53. The Director of DCI introduced conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.15/Rev.1, drawing attention to recent comments by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) attached to this paper, as well as a revised draft decision that took account of these comments.

54. Delegations expressed unanimous support for the need to maintain the unified budget structure which was already proving its usefulness in enhanced transparency and flexibility. In terms of general priorities, many delegations also expressed appreciation for the efforts to distinguish between "core" and "non-core" activities that had been undertaken under Action 1 initiated by the High Commissioner. Some nevertheless observed that there could still be a need to prioritize among "core" activities, and it was not yet clear how this would be done. Several delegations emphasized that programmes for the benefit of women and children must be included as "core" activities. On the subject of assistance to internally displaced persons, one delegation observed that this responsibility should be assumed by UNHCR wherever appropriate.

55. Many delegations cautioned that the proposed introduction of trust funds must not be allowed to erode the unified budget structure. It was essential that their use should follow strict criteria and remain within specific limits. While echoing this concern, some delegations pointed out that the proposals under discussion represented minor adjustments and were aimed at achieving greater flexibility.

56. Some delegations expressed the fear that formulating the budget in one particular currency may lead to a false perception of variations in activities carried out in different areas of the world and encouraged UNHCR to consider the possibility of a multi-currency budget, or of other possible means to address this concern.

57. In conclusion of this discussion, the Director of DCI provided information of a technical nature requested by some delegations. He reconfirmed that there could be no intention of departing from the unified budget structure. He also acknowledged that it would be necessary to establish clear operational guidelines and criteria to govern the use of the extra budgetary trust funds.

58. The Committee then approved the draft decision, as revised (see Annex I, B).

VIII. PROTECTION/PROGRAMME POLICY

A. Economic and social impact of refugee populations on host developing countries, as well as other countries

59. Presenting the conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.16 entitled *Economic and Social Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as other Countries*, the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support emphasized that because of its protection implications, this issue remained a core concern for UNHCR, and was being addressed by through catalytic and advocacy activities, underpinned by partnerships with developmental and local actors.

60. In the ensuing debate, many delegations voiced their concern that most host countries were not just developing, they were poor. These countries have experienced the impact of massive refugee populations in many ways, frequently for extended period of time. Some delegations representing host countries acknowledged that while refugee presence could generate a positive impact, this was often outweighed by the negative impact, and gave specific examples of the burden in economic, social, environmental, political and moral terms, as well as the risks to the security and reputation of the host country. One delegation urged that a proper impact assessment should be carried out and presented as a formal publication to the international community.

61. Some delegations observed that the issue of host country contributions was increasingly complex and could not always be measured in dollars and cents. They recalled the principle of international solidarity and burden-sharing, and the role of developed countries. The search for solutions required a comprehensive, integrated, co-ordinated and participatory approach which took into account the needs both of the country of origin and the

country of asylum. For instance, voluntary repatriation - which some host countries maintained as the best durable solution - should be prepared for by initial investments by the international community in development and capacity-building projects in the country of origin. One delegation also felt that developed countries should be more open to resettlement.

62. Many delegations expressed support for the various field-based partnership initiatives, and in particular, for the collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Tanzania. It was felt that this should usefully serve as a model for other bilateral arrangements.

63. Several delegations also appreciated UNHCR's advocacy activities vis-à-vis the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) agencies, as well as its participation in the Common Country Assessment (CCA) process to address this issue. One delegation encouraged UNHCR to continue its dialogue at the local level with the UN Resident Coordinators, and to extend this dialogue to international financial institutions. One delegation observed, however, that putting this issue on the development agenda was primarily the responsibility of host governments, assisted by development actors, and not that of UNHCR.

64. A number of delegations welcomed the High Commissioner's call to empower refugees as agents of development. Some felt that the international community should look for further creative ideas to help host countries cope with the burden of massive refugee populations. One delegation was particularly concerned that socially-oriented initiatives of this kind would be affected by the budget cuts.

65. While supporting the empowerment idea, some delegations advised caution with regard to its implementation and possible repercussions. One delegation viewed the challenge as that of promoting self-reliance while discouraging further outflows. In this vein, another delegation recommended the study of his country's experience, in which giving refugees the right to work had led to self-reliance without affecting the agrarian rights of the local population.

66. Finally, several delegations expressed interest in the ongoing review by UNHCR of protracted refugee situations and the promotion of self-reliance and community development among refugees and host communities.

B. Refugee women

67. Introducing this sub-item, the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women/Gender Equality drew attention to the contents of conference room paper EC/51/SC/CRP.17, notably the current efforts it described aimed at empowering refugee women. She described the budgetary reductions operated by UNHCR that also affected, both directly and indirectly, the implementation of gender policies developed by UNHCR. She also briefed the Standing Committee on the recent Dialogue with Refugee Women organized in partnership with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, which had brought fifty refugee, displaced and returnee women to Geneva to discuss issues of concern to them.

68. Some delegations having participated in this Dialogue welcomed the opportunity to meet and consult with refugee women and asked for the process to be repeated. Several delegations also commented on the panel presentation during the Standing Committee at which five refugee women had made presentations. Such an event was a unique opportunity for donors, staff and delegations to learn more about the needs of refugee women from the refugees themselves. They referred to the strong call made by refugee women for their active involvement in planning and decision-making. Two delegations also stressed the demand made for individual documentation for all refugees including women.

69. Delegations expressed firm support for UNHCR's efforts to advance the rights of refugee women and promote gender equality, calling for assurances that they would rank as core activities and not be adversely affected by budget revisions. These delegations also emphasized the importance of UNHCR's presence in the field, noting that the Regional Advisors for Refugee Women/Gender Equality currently covered several countries. Some delegations welcomed the inclusion of a gender specialist in the emergency teams in Guinea and Sierra Leone, recommending that this should become standard practice.

70. A number of delegations observed with regret that while some progress had been made, much remained to be done to translate UNHCR's current policies on refugee women into practice. It was noted by several delegations that while budgetary reductions have a negative impact on the activities for women, many of those activities do not actually require financial allocations, and therefore should have been implemented regardless of the financial difficulties faced by UNHCR. They expressed particular concern over issues of sexual violence, drawing attention to the risks faced by women when collecting basic items such as water or firewood. Some delegations referred to the ten-year review of UNHCR's implementation of the policy and guidelines on refugee women being undertaken by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children of which the results were eagerly awaited. Other delegations also encouraged UNHCR to continue activities to ensure that refugee women's voices were included in peace initiatives, pledging their support and assistance to this process. They drew attention to the essential role of women in community development, and commended UNHCR on Volume II of the *Good practices on gender equality mainstreaming: a practical guide to empowerment*. Several delegations expressed their support for active male involvement in activities that promote gender equality.

71. Some delegations also pointed out that promoting gender equality was part of the job of every staff member in UNHCR and required particular attention and commitment from Senior Management.

IX. COORDINATION

72. The Head, a.i. of Secretariat and Inter-Organization Service in introducing this agenda item, provided an update on current issues of coordination within the United Nations system, focusing on the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and arrangements for the humanitarian segment of ECOSOC. An information note (EC/51/SC.INF.3) made available to delegations prior to the meeting provided further information on these and other coordination. issues. The Special

Coordinator on Internal Displacement also provided some introductory comments on the work of the Senior Network on Internal Displacement. In particular, he emphasized that host authorities, in some cases, could be doing more to assist internally displaced populations. He also called for increased and sustained donor support, particularly in relation to lingering problems of displacement. The Standing Committee paid tribute to the work accomplished by the outgoing Special Coordinator.

73. Under this agenda item, the President of the WFP Executive Board, provided a brief introduction to the Bureau's structure, role and programme of work. She also drew attention to the governance project adopted by the Board last October, which was seeking to address many aspects of the functioning of the Board, ranging from practical arrangements for how the Board conducted its business to introducing results-based management in WFP.

74. In their comments, delegations highlighted the importance of discussing coordination issues within the Standing Committee. This has become more apparent following the outcome of Actions 1-3 initiated by the High Commissioner earlier in the year. Commenting further on the prioritization of the Office's activities, one delegation cautioned that engaging in partnerships should not be used as an excuse to disregard responsibilities. Queries were made as to progress achieved in reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNHCR and WFP, as well as with regard to UNHCR'S role in situations of internal displacement. The observer delegation speaking on behalf of NGOs suggested that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should be more involved in situations of internal displacement. He also stated that the involvement of humanitarian agencies trying to assist displaced populations should not be conditional upon their access to these populations. UNHCR was asked to clarify its role with respect to the internally displaced in Afghanistan.

75. In response, the Head a.i.of Secretariat and Inter-organization Service stressed that partnerships should result in effective complementarity to fill gaps in humanitarian work. With regard to the MOU with WFP, she informed delegations that the review was focusing on its implementation and should hopefully be completed by the end of the year.

X. MANAGEMENT, FINANCE, OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

A. UNHCR's inspection plan and activities

76. This item was introduced on behalf of the Inspector-General (currently on mission) by a Senior Inspection Officer, who referred to the activities as summarized in document EC/51/SC/CRP.18. She explained that the coming two months would be devoted to preparing a strategy and plan of action for the investigation function, to ensure that internal controls in all field offices were as effective as possible, and to strengthen partnership with other bodies within the United Nations system (notably the Office of Internal Oversight Services) and with member States.

77. One delegation noted with appreciation the distribution through UNHCR's Website of the summary reports of East Timor (Indonesia) and Guinea following the inquiries into the murder of UNHCR's staff. This delegation expressed the hope that this transparency would continue, and also looked forward to

receiving the final report on investigations currently underway in Kenya. Another delegation drew attention to the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between the inspection and evaluation functions.

B. UNHCR's evaluation plan and activities

78. The Head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit introduced UNHCR's current evaluation plan and activities as set out in document EC/51/SC/CRP.19. He also drew attention to a draft evaluation policy paper and sets of guidelines for the management of evaluations and for self-evaluation that were nearing completion.

79. Several delegations commended UNHCR for the substantial improvements achieved in the management and strategic direction of its evaluation activities. One delegation recommended upgrading and increasing the resources devoted to the evaluation function to match those of inspection. This delegation also suggested that consideration might be given to creating evaluation officer posts in the field. The need for adequate resources notably in core staffing was echoed by another delegation which also mentioned the challenges of effective longer-term follow-up to the recommendations emerging from the evaluations. Some delegations welcomed the contacts on evaluation projects between UNHCR and governments, and acknowledged the need for close cooperation to ensure consistency of standards and avoid a duplication of effort. Specific suggestions on subjects of possible future evaluations were put forward by some delegations.

C. UNHCR's human resources management

80. Introducing this item, the Head a.i. of the Human Resources Service referred to the policy issues under review, as contained in document EC/51/SC/CRP.20. She then described the various measures currently underway in the context of the reduction of staff as well as an accelerated postings process designed to assign up to one quarter of Professional staff to new postings by mid-August. Time-limited programmes for targeted Early Retirement and Voluntary Separation were also being implemented to encourage some staff to separate from service in the period 2001/2002.

81. Several delegations expressed their interest in these latest developments, asking to continue to be kept informed and expressing their willingness to provide support as required. Some delegations stressed that the organization also needed a recruitment strategy, despite the downsizing, to ensure a new intake of needed skills. One delegation suggested that an independent evaluation should be made of the effects of the change to rank-in-post notably in a decentralized environment. Another delegation recalled that staff security must remain a priority. One delegation also recorded her interest in the appointment of female field security advisers. Several delegations expressed their concern over staff cuts, particularly those affecting local staff who remained the most vulnerable. One of these delegations also pointed out that reducing local staff could have political implications that went beyond issues of cost-effectiveness. Another delegation drew attention to the importance of taking account of family life when reviewing the rotation policy.

82. Concluding the discussion of this issue, the Deputy High Commissioner took note of the wide range of issues raised by delegations. She confirmed that the Working Group on Rotation would complete its work in the autumn, at which time the comprehensive review of human resource processes would be undertaken. She also referred interested delegations to various analyses relating to gender and geograpnical balance, contained in the "State of UNHCR's Staff" that had been issued late in 2000. Other detailed information, notably the results of the working groups, would be made available in due course.

XI. STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE UNHCR STAFF COUNCIL

83. In the course of the meeting, the Chairperson of UNHCR's Staff Council addressed the meeting, welcoming the inclusion of human resources management on the Standing Committee's agenda. He emphasized that staff morale was being severely tested by the slow pace with which inadequacies in the management of human resources were being addressed observing that ad hoc, emergency measures were now being implemented whereas a more strategic approach was called for. The issue of lack of accountability of managers was also raised, as well as the strains resulting from substantial post reductions linked to Action 2 and which mainly affected local staff in the field. The staff looked forward to a more meaningful dialogue with senior management, based on a fair and transparent application of existing rules and regulations.

XII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

84. There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

DECISIONS
(as adopted at the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee,
25 - 27 June 2001)

A. DECISION ON OVERALL PROGRAMME AND FUNDING PROJECTIONS FOR 2001

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-first session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/944, para. 26), as well as its discussions under item 3 (i) at the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee and at successive consultations on the budget;

Taking note of the letters of 4 April and 31 May 2001[2] from the High Commissioner to the Chairman of the Executive Committee concerning the three Actions initiated by the High Commissioner upon assuming his functions;

(a) *Reaffirms* its support for this initiative aimed at reviewing the priorities and funding mechanisms of the Office and its request to be informed by the High Commissioner of the outcomes of the review process;

(b) *Expresses appreciation* in this context of the High Commissioner's letters of 4 April 2001 and 31 May 2001 providing information on the results of his initiative;

(c) *Expresses its support for* the principles resulting from Action 1, defining UNHCR's core activities;

(d) Takes note of the outcome of Action 2 concerning adjustments to UNHCR's programmes in 2001, and approves the revised Annual Programme Budget of $ 782.1 million for 2001, giving a total 2001 revised budget of $ 852.9 million as at 30 May 2001, including Supplementary Programmes, Regular Budget and JPOs; and notes that projected initial needs for the 2002 budget amount to $ 828.1 million.

(e) *Urges* UNHCR to consult earlier and more fully with Governments on its programme and budget formulation.

(f) *Invites* governments to increase their levels of projected contributions for 2001 in order to fully meet these revised needs;

(g) *Acknowledges* with appreciation the burden shouldered by developing and least developed countries hosting refugees and recommends that further consultations be undertaken to quantify and reflect such burdens appropriately in UNHCR's documentation;

(h) *Encourages* governments to ensure that in formulating their national budgets sufficient resources are allocated as contributions to UNHCR to enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandate in 2002;

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[2] EC/51/SC/CRP.14/Add.2.

(i) *Takes note* of the High Commissioner's proposals on funding mechanisms as reflected in his letter of 4 April 2001, and requests that UNHCR convene appropriate consultations to discuss these issues further.

B. DECISION ON PROPOSALS FOR BUDGET STRUCTURE

The Standing Committee,

Referring to the proposals set out in document EC/51/SC/CRP.15/Rev.1 on the budget structure,

(a) *Takes note* of the comments provided by the ACABQ in their letter of 7 June 2001, contained in Annex I to the aforementioned document;

(b) *Takes note* in particular that the ACABQ will further review these proposals in September 2001, in the context of its consideration of UNHCR's proposed Annual Programme Budget for 2002;

(c) *Recalls* the ACABQ's earlier recommendation (A/AC.96/900/Add.3, para. 40) that the Executive Committee should provide policy guidelines to assist the High Commissioner when accepting additional supplementary activities; *notes* the relevance in this context of the guiding principles applicable to the resourcing of UNHCR's unified budget adopted by the Standing Committee at its 18th meeting (A/AC.96/939 Annex B); and *requests* that draft policy guidelines addressing all the criteria mentioned by the ACABQ be presented to the 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee;

(d) *Requests* UNHCR to prepare the Annual Programme Budget for 2002 within the unified budget format.